

speech in which Kennedy said, "what our young men had saved, our diplomats and our Presidents have frittered away." When the *Playboy* interviewer insisted that Kennedy's liberal Democratic policies must have conflicted with Hunt's conservatism, Hunt was unable to enumerate specific mistakes he thought Kennedy made. "Unless there is a turn toward constitutional government and a decrease in pro-Socialist legislation forced through the Congress," he declared, "the Kennedy Administration is likely to appear highly constructive when compared to the Administrations yet to follow."

Hunt's conversion to pro-Kennedyism to the point of conveniently forgetting the record of his own virulent anti-Kennedy actions may have been an old man's way of working out guilt over defaming the martyred president before he died. Or it may have been a subterfuge for getting the growing army of Kennedy assassination investigators off his back. Or it may have been merely another example of Hunt's political eccentricity. In any case, Hunt got his wish. The Kennedy assassination was not forgotten. But it was not remembered in the way Hunt would have preferred. Instead of laying to rest public doubts, both the Warren Report and Hunt's own pronouncements only aroused new questions about the murder of President Kennedy. Assassination investigators, both amateur and professional, proliferated from coast to coast and overseas. The farther away from the scene of the crime the investigators resided, the more byzantine—and the more certain—were their theories. And before long, H. L. Hunt, the Kennedy-hater turned Kennedy-eulogist, found himself the prime suspect in several new Kennedy assassination probes.

The most serious and threatening investigation emanated from New Orleans in early 1967. The leader of the probe was Jim Garrison, a flamboyant and controversial New Orleans district attorney who was a local legend in his own time. Garrison was able to get a group of wealthy New Orleans businessmen to finance his reopening of the Kennedy assassination case by convincing them he could prove the plot had been hatched in New Orleans. Rumors about the targets of the Garrison probe first hit the streets in early 1967, when Garrison ordered the arrest of a retired New Orleans businessman and admitted homosexual named Clay Shaw. In the wake of Shaw's arrest, some stories contended that Garrison was going after a ring of New Orleans homosexuals. Other stories said Garrison was after the CIA. Still other stories had it that Garrison was pinning Kennedy's assassination on a "wealthy Texas businessman." Not surprisingly, the "wealthy Texas businessman" most often connected with the rumors was H. L. Hunt.

Just as in the days of the Warren Commission probe, Hunt's security chief Paul Rothermel did a first-rate job of keeping his boss informed. One of Rothermel's earliest reports on the Garrison investigation came on August 23, 1967, when he informed Hunt that *Life* magazine was due to "come out with a big spread blasting Garrison and his probe of the Kennedy assassination." Rothermel went on to say (correctly, as it turned out) that *Life* would link

\$5,000 worth of hotel and gambling credit extended to Garrison on a visit to Las Vegas. "In addition, *Life* will try to show that Bobby Kennedy and the Kennedy family are opposed to Garrison's probe," Rothermel continued.

Seven weeks later, Hunt received a much more unsettling memo from Rothermel. "I have information that Garrison is referring to either you or Bunker as the wealthy oilman in his probe," the security chief wrote. Rothermel's memo did not elaborate beyond that. He did not say exactly how Garrison planned to tie in Bunker and/or H.L., and he did not suggest what course of action should be taken.

From that time forward, the progress of the Garrison probe became a matter of consuming interest for the Hunts and their security chief. Rothermel pumped his sources for constant updates on the probe, and kept Hunt informed of the increasing dangers he already faced as a result of the affair. Among other things, Rothermel advised Hunt not to go to New Orleans for fear that he "might either be arrested or subpoenaed." Hunt elected to heed Rothermel's warning at least for the time being, and on December 6, 1967, canceled a scheduled meeting in New Orleans with his friend Senator Russell Long.

At some point Rothermel got hold of a hand-drawn chart which purportedly detailed Garrison's theory of the assassination. The chart consisted of a series of name boxes and circles connected by dotted lines and arrows. At the top of the chart was the name "H. L. Hunt" and below that the notation "screened three times by Rothermel." Directly below Hunt's name were lines emanating to the Dallas police, Jack Ruby, the FBI, Oswald, a Texas congressman, and several lesser-known New Orleans and Texas characters. The chart did not explain exactly what all the lines and boxes were supposed to mean or the supposed scenario of what took place, but the implication was clear: Garrison and/or his investigators apparently believed H. L. Hunt had had a hand in Kennedy's murder.

The Hunts and Rothermel continued to fret over the Garrison probe for the rest of that dreary winter. Then the spring brought a chain of welcome news. On April 3, 1968, Rothermel reported in a terse note that "A C.I.A. agent in Houston, Texas has indicated that an effort is being made to have a lunacy hearing on Jim Garrison, the New Orleans District Attorney. The informant said he did not know who would push the lunacy charges but that the C.I.A. seems concerned enough to be behind the movement." Now it appeared that the tide was turning—against Garrison.

Remarkably enough, the Hunts received from one of Garrison's investigators the very next day an apology and reassurance that they were *not* the targets of the Garrison probe. Once again, the message came in through Rothermel. According to a Rothermel memo of April 4, 1968, the bearer of the message was one Bill Wood, a "former C.I.A. man and investigator for Garrison," who was in Dallas doing some legwork. Wood first apologized for rumors that his research was focusing on Hunt. Wood said that Garrison had

FROM TEXAS RICH BY
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